

[Reminiscences of Mr. Joe Prewitt]

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Reminiscences of Mr. Joe Prewitt.

Mr Prewitt came to Durango, Colorado, in 1861, and in May, 1882 he came to Farmington, which was his home for several years. At that time Farmington contained only about ten buildings, and all of them were made of adobe, with dirt roofs. "Not a shingle in the town." "Well", he said, "it was just as well and in some instances, better; For [?] Instances frequently, there would be a group of cow-boys sitting in a saloon, and just for amusement, they would shoot through the roof with their [sinshooters?], which would have made a regular sieve of a singled roof, but with a dirt roof it did but little harm, for the bullet could be seen to raise a little streak of dirt a few inches in the air, then the dirt in the roof would just settle back and the hole closed up.

Some of the old buildings are still in pretty good shape, especially the old Markley Building, where I was located when I first went to Farmington. The two old school houses were both adobe, but are now both encased in a sheathing of lumber. The second school-house was really a church which was dedicated on Christmas day in 1883. The building was used for all kinds of meetings -except dances- it was never used for dances. There was a man named George [Meedaam?], who was Presiding Elder of the Methodist Church who opened a "School For Higher Education" in the building, but it did not continue.

The first fruit crop was harvested in 1883, but there was not more than a bushel or two of it all told. But the fruit crop was soon greatly increased, and before many years the fruit from The San Juan Valley was shipped by the train load across land and sea, and this fruit has [made?] for its self a wide reputation for good fruit with fine flavor. At this early [My?]

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Farmington had no [shade?] trees But to-day the town can boast of many beauties and adds much to the attractiveness of the homes there.

“Frank Allens Grand Hotel” was just a three rooms and west and north of Allens place Schuyler Smith had a farm (later bought by Blake) which was broad and 2 falt and unfenced and often on Sundays, when the cow-coys of the town were out for a bit of fun, they raced thrie ponies across this flat and on through the town, shooting their guns into the air with a whoop stirring up both dust and noise.

Occasionally Indians indulged in the same pastime, till one day in the winter on 84 - 5, it had been fenced in by “Dobe jack” who lived on the place. The fence, which they did not see in time to stop, was hit full force and all piled up in a heap, both horses and Indians, and that was the last of the Indians racing through the town.

The Navajo frequently brought in a wild turkey or a saddle of vanison, which they gladly sold for fifty cents.

In front of the present “Avery Hotel” to the south and west of it, was (and is) an acre or so of good flat ground-which had been sowed to winter wheat. In the spring it was fresh and green looking and a good feeding ground for wild geese which frequently furnished the inhabitants with a very palatable dinner of roast wild-goose.

Making the trip to Durango at that time was quite an undertaking. The Animas River was crossed nine times, and there being only one bridge, it had to be forded just eight times. There was no road, 'twas but a trail where some one else had driven, avoiding as best he could the roughest places, and winding around trees and big boulders, and you had to keep a-going to make it in two days. If it was muddy it took three or four days, and you couldn't make it at all if the snow was deep, while we make it in about an hour in any kind of weather. Well, they had regular stopping places on the road where we could get meals, but the best place of all was at the home of Mrs. Kountz, who served such good meals, that we made every effort to get there at meal time. The memory of them is still very vivid.

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She lived in that adobe house in Aztec still standing, but showing the age of its years, just between the bridge and a large garage as you enter the town going north.

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The mail arrived from Durango, by going first to Ft. Lewis, then to the "Johnnie Pond Ranch" on the La Plata, where the stage stayed over night-then to Pendelton, N.M. the Post Office on the La Plata, in the store of Dan Rhoads, Post Master, on to Aztec N.M. and across to Bloomfield, which was quite a town-and then down to Farmington. We got the mail twice a week, except when the water was high. " Source of information

Mr. Joe Prewitt; Durango, Colorado.

Reminiscences of Mr. Joe Prewitt. (Continued).

During the "Stockton War", in the early eighties, and after "Barker" had been killed, as well as Fort Stockton, there occurred the killing [?] of two men, one named Pyatt and one named George Brown, Pyatt being on the Stockton/ side and Brown on the other side. The shooting took place at a New Years dance when the two men met outside of the dance hall, both men shot and both men were killed, each killed the other, as they were both dead shots.

"The first store in the town was "Miller's", and the second was Cheeneys, in the Old Markley building, which was built by Cheeney, as well as the Old Palmer house, just north of the present Palmer home, and both were bought by Mr. Markley when he arrived.

"I was employed by Markley, and later went into the business with him. The demand for produce was good, in those days, and when sold, brought good prices potatoes 10¢ per pound. Hay \$140.00 per ton at times. Everything hauled from Chuma. There was more water in the old Jan Juan in those days than there is now, and in the high waters during the spring the river took it's toll and many were drownd. On August [?]th, 1881, the first regular train on the new Denver and Rio Grand R.R. rolled in to Durango and Farmington

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helped to celebrate the event, which was done in a big way, as it ment so much to both towns.

“This was the beginning of the end of the “old days”

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“Yes, this was, but they were, in some ways, superior days. For people then were honest, and brave, and would go to any length to do the right thing. We never locked our doors - not even during a six weeks absence at a time. No stealing — stealing would not have been tolerated. People were always willing to extend their hospitality to the traveler. Even the Indians would do the same. I remember when my brother and I were lost on the reservation, some Indians took us in to a two roomed hogan, and made us comfortable for the night with plenty of comforts and blankets and sheep skins to sleep on. They were generous, too with food (no matter how hard it was for them to get it) but it was better not to look too closely when they were preparing it. I have found that the Indians will treat you well, provided you go half way, and treat him rightly.” Source of Information.

Mr. Joe Prewitt. Durango, Colorado. Personal interview.